

Message Text

SECRET

PAGE 01 MANAMA 01033 01 OF 02 130134Z
ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 /026 W
-----130211Z 084001 /70

O 122300Z MAY 77
FM AMEMBASSY MANAMA BAHRAIN
TO SECSTATE WASH DC 4620
INFO CINCUSNAVEUR LONDON UK
COMIDEASTFOR
USCINCEUR VAIHINGEN GE
COMNAVFACENGCOM
SECDEF WASH DC
JCS WASH DC
CNO WASH DC

S E C R E T SECTION 1 OF 2 MANAMA 1033/1

EXDIS MILITARY ADDEES TAKE AS SPECAT EXCLUSIVE FOR

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: MORG, PFOR, BA
SUBJECT: MIDEASTFORCE

REF: STATE 104883

1. SUMMARY. MEETING WITH FOREIGN MINISTER MAY 12
HAD TWO MAJOR RESULTS: HE SAID HE INTENDED TO GO
PUBLIC WITH FORMAL TERMINATION OF HOMEPORTING. HE
DID SO LATER IN DAY WITH GROUP OF VISITING AMERICAN
JOURNALISTS. SUBSTANTIVELY, FONMIN SAID THAT AFTER
FIRST CAREFUL READING HE HAD ONLY THREE MINOR POINTS
TO RAISE REGARDING THREE DOCUMENTS CONTAINED REFTEL.
SECONDARILY, FONMIN AGREED TO ANNUAL RENT WHICH I
SUGGESTED - 2 MILLION DOLLARS. END SUMMARY.

2. MY MEETING MAY 12 WITH FOREIGN MINISTER FOCUSED
MORE ON PRESS ASPECTS OF MIDEASTFORCE THAN ON SUBSTANCE

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OF DOCUMENTS CONTAINED REFTEL. FONMIN SAID RECENT RASH
OF ARTICLES IN U.S. PRESS ON CONTINUING PRESENCE HERE OF
NAVY MADE IT NECESSARY FOR HIM TO TELL VISITING PRESS MORE
THAN HE OR WE HAD PREVIOUSLY PUT ON THE RECORD. IN RESPONSE
TO MY QUESTIONING, HE SAID RECENT FITCHETT ARTICLE IN WASH-
INGTON POST AND INDICATIONS THAT VISITING GROUP OF SIX
U.S. JOURNALISTS WOULD PRESS HIM HARD ON NAVY QUESTION MADE

HIS DECISION TO GO PUBLIC ONLY LOGICAL CHOICE. IN ABSENCE OF REQUESTED DEPT GUIDANCE (MANAMA 1028), I URGED THAT HE AND I STICK TO EXISTING, AGREED RESPONSE TO PRESS. HE SAID HE WOULD CONSIDER THIS BUT COULD NOT COMMIT HIMSELF. LATER, JUST PRIOR MININFO'S LUNCH FOR VISITING JOURNALISTS, I SUGGESTED TO MININFO THAT FONMIN'S DECISION TO TELL ALL TO VISITING PRESS WAS PREMATURE AND UNWISE. HE SAID HE WOULD RAISE POINT WITH FONMIN BEFORE LATTER BRIEFED GROUP.

3. IN THE EVENT, GROUP OF JOURNALISTS ARRIVED LATER IN DAY AT RESIDENCE ALL AGOG WITH NEWS THAT FONMIN HAD CONFIRMED TO THEM ON THE RECORD THAT NAVY WOULD LEAVE JUNE 30, "AS BAHRAIN ALL ALONG HAD SAID WOULD BE THE CASE." ACCORDING TO MOST FORTHCOMING OF JOURNALISTS, MULLEN OF U.S. NEWS AND WORLD REPORT, FONMIN WOULD ADD ONLY THAT RESIDUAL PRESENCE HERE WOULD BE DOD SCHOOL AND OCCASIONAL VISITS AND SUPPLY OF U.S. VESSELS "ON USUAL TERMS." MULLEN ADDED THAT GROUP HAD SAUDI CROWN PRINCE ON THE RECORD THAT SAG WAS OPPOSED TO FOREIGN PRESENCES IN AREA. MULLEN ADMITTED, HOWEVER, THAT SAUDI STATEMENT WAS IN CONTEXT OF DISCUSSION OF AFRICAN HORN AND THAT INSERTION BY MULLEN OF MIDEASTFORCE INTO CONVERSATION MAY HAVE BEEN CASE OF "LEADING THE WITNESS." NEVERTHELESS, I EXPECT THAT SOME OF JOURNALISTS, FROM TIME, NYT, WASHINGTON POST, U.S. NEWS, AND NEWSWEEK, WILL FILE STORIES THAT NAVY IS FINISHED HERE. THIS IS OF COURSE CONTRARY TO NEWS THEY AND THEIR EDITORS HAVE BEEN GETTING OF LATE FROM BAHRAIN AND SOME MAY TREAT IT AS MAJOR STORY, THOUGH I MADE POINT IN OFF THE RECORD COMMENTS THAT THEY DID NOT YET HAVE WHOLE STORY AND OUGHT NOT TO MAKE TOO MUCH OF
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FONMIN'S COMMENTS.

4. COMMENT. FONMIN HAS BEEN DISTURBED BY AMOUNT OF PRESS ATTENTION MIDEASTFORCE HAS BEEN GETTING BUT HIS PERFORMANCE TODAY CLEARLY GOES BEYOND LEGITIMATE CONCERN AND, IN MY VIEW, IS CASE OF HIS GETTING HIS POUND OF PUBLIC FLESH BEFORE SIGNING UP IN PRIVATE ON DETAILS OF NEW FORMULA. AT LEAST, I BELIEVE THIS IS THE CASE AND WILL SOON KNOW AS FONMIN AND I PLAN TO MEET NEXT WEEK TO GO OVER NEW ARRANGEMENTS IN DETAIL. IN ANY EVENT, FONMIN HAS HAD HIS SAY WITH THE PRESS, THOUGH PREMATURELY, AND AT THIS POINT I FEEL THAT OUR POSITION HAS NOT BEEN SERIOUSLY DAMAGED, JUST EXPOSED. END COMMENT.

5. SUBSTANTIVELY, IN OUR PRE-JOURNALIST MEETING, FONMIN SAID HE HAD READ REFTEL DOCUMENTS CAREFULLY AND, THOUGH HE WOULD HAVE TO GO OVER THEM WITH GOB LEGAL ADVISOR,

HAD ONLY THREE COMMENTS AT THIS POINT:

--COULD NOT NAVY AIRPLANE REMAINING HERE BE
ASSIGNED TO ME, AS WAS CASE IN MANY FOREIGN
SERVICE POSTS? I SAID I WAS ALL BUT ONE HUNDRED
PERCENT CERTAIN THAT IT COULD NOT, BUT THAT I
WOULD CHECK.
--FONMIN WANTED "PEACEFUL NATURE" OF MAC FLIGHTS
SPELLED OUT IN LEASE. I SAID I FELT WE COULD
MEET HIS NEED ON THIS POINT.

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S E C R E T SECTION 2 OF 2 MANAMA 1033/2

EXDIS MILITARY ADDEES TAKE AS SPECAT EXCLUSIVE FOR

--DURATION. FONMIN SAID HE FELT THAT AMENDED LEASE
OUGHT TO MAKE PROVISION FOR MUTUAL AGREEMENT
ON TERMINATION OF LEASE, NOT JUST FOR UNILATERAL
USG DECISION TO RENEW ON FOUR MONTHS' NOTICE.
I REPLIED THAT I BELIEVED THAT LEASE HAD ADEQUATE
TERMINATION LANGUAGE IN ARTICLE THIRTEEN BUT THAT
IF THIS NOT SPECIFIC ENOUGH WE COULD MODIFY IT.

6. I ASKED IF FONMIN HAD ANY OTHER QUESTIONS ABOUT OUR
PROPOSED DOCUMENTARY BASE FOR NEW FORMAT AND
HE REPLIED THAT AT THIS TIME HE DID NOT, "IT SEEMED
ALL RIGHT" TO HIM. I SUGGESTED, THEN, THAT WE MOVE
TOWARD A SIGNING AS SOON AS POSSIBLE, AFTER POINTS HE
HAD RAISED HAD BEEN RESOLVED. HE SEEMED AGREEABLE TO

FAST ACTION AND VOLUNTEERED THAT HE WOULD BE GOING
OVER THE DETAILS WITH THE AMIR ON MAY 14, AND THAT
HE AND I COULD GET TOGETHER AGAIN SOON THEREAFTER.
I PRESSED ONE LAST SUBSTANTIVE POINT, THE RENT. I

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SAID IT SEEMED TO ME THAT RENT FIGURE IS PURELY POLITICAL,
NOT ECONOMIC, AND THAT FROM OUR POINT OF VIEW WE WOULD
HAVE EASIER TIME IN CONGRESS IF RENT WAS MUCH LOWER.
HE AGREED, AND ADDED THAT HIS POLITICAL PROBLEM WITH RENT WAS
KEEPIN BRITISH EXPATRIATES WHO RUN THE PORT QUIET. HE
ASKED FOR MY FIGURE. I SAID I FELT HALF THE PRESENT RENT
FOR PORT ACCESS AND SHORE FACILITIES WE HAVE BEEN
DISCUSSING WOULD GO DOWN WELL ON CAPITOL HILL. HE AGREED
THAT SUM IS LARGE ENOUGH TO KEEP PORT AUTHORITIES QUIET.
WE AGREED, THEN, ON SUM OF TWO MILLION DOLLARS RENT, THOUGH
HE RESERVED HIS POSITION ON WHAT, PRECISELY, WE WOULD BE
RENTING AND I RESERVED MINE ON THE SUM UNTIL WE HAVE
SETTLED THE LAST DETAILS.

COMMENT. WE SEEM TO BE APPROACHING THE DETAILS OF THE NEW
FORMAT LIKE PORCUPINES MAKE LOVE--VERY, VERY CAREFULLY--
BUT WE ARE GETTING THERE.

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Type: TE
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